3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

caps are the chief article of manufacture. Really old specimens are exceedingly rare, and we were very fortunate in lighting upon six circular medallions, about ten inches in diameter, of green velvet embroidered in gold and silver with a Persian floral design. These, I was told on good authority, once adorned the State robes of the indigenous Princes of Kucha. Here again, though the design as a whole is Persian, there is a touch of China in certain parallel wavy lines, while the use of circular medallions in embroidery on robes is itself a Chinese device.

It was extraordinarily interesting to find, persisting in the south of the Tarim Basin right up to modern times, that same cultural mingling of Persia and China with the indigenous element which marked the sixth and seventh centuries of the Christian era, when the T'ang Emperors ruled the Middle Kingdom and the last of the Sassanids reigned in Zoroastrian Iran.[1] In nineteenth-century Khotan we have a rug of Turkish weave with a design in which the colours and patterns of China and Persia are closely intermixed. We find also an embroidery with a peculiarly Turkish stitch done on Chinese silk or Bokharan velvet and showing designs in which Chinese and Persian art are represented in almost equal proportions. There could be no more striking illustration of that peculiar feature of the Tarim Basin's history, the cultural mingling of East and West, to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter.

But carpet-weaving and embroidery were not the only arts in which bygone Khotan excelled. Among the most attractive products of its craftsmanship were brass and copper household utensils decorated with elaborate floral designs in pierced metal work. This is another lost art, for though teapots and water-jugs of graceful shape are still made, their only decoration is a rough chasing of lines following the curves of the pot. The old pierced metal work, four specimens of which we were fortunate enough to secure, is strongly reminiscent of the similar work in silver and copper still done at Isfahan. Here I could detect no Chinese influence, probably because the *chainak* (tea-pot) and *aftaba-lagan* (jug and basin

[1] Cf. the discoveries made by Sir Aurel Stein in the seventh-century cemetery at Astana, near Turfan, of fine figured silks both in Chinese and in pure Sassanian style ("Geographical Journal," June, 1925, p. 492); also the Sassanian embroideries on damask found in the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas near Tunhwang ("Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. II, p. 208).

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

for hand-washing) are "turban-head" utensils in which the Chinese took no interest.

The calligraphic art seems never to have flourished in Chinese Turkistan, and no Turki or Persian manuscripts of any merit appear to have been produced locally. Among the masses of "junk" brought to me at Kashgar, however, I was fortunate enough to come upon a genuine fifteenth-century Persian MS., in almost perfect condition. Noticing that the writing was exquisite and that a very early date appeared on the last page, I pointed out disparagingly that the book contained no pictures (this was not surprising) and few illuminated headings, and offered five taels for it. Eventually, after months of desultory bargaining, I acquired it for sixteen. It proved on examination by Dr. Edwardes of the British Museum and Dr. Nicholson of Cambridge to be a MS. of considerable importance, dated A.H. 150 or A.D. 1446, and containing four different Persian works, namely:

(1) The *Kulliyat* of Farid-ud-din 'Attar (twelfth-thirteenth century).

(2) The *Fihi Mafihi* of the famous mystic poet Jalal-ud-din Rumi.

(3) A mystical work called *Tarab ul Majalis*.

(4) In the margin, the *Masnavi* of Jalal-ud-din Rumi.

The *Kulliyat* and the two Rumi works are early enough recensions to be of some importance textually, while the *Tarab ul Majalis* is almost unique, only one other copy of the work being known, that in the India Office Library.

As might be expected from the isolated position of the Tarim Basin and the mediæval conditions prevailing, the country is a happy hunting-ground for the folklorist. Quaint customs and superstitions, most of them dating far back beyond Islam and even Buddhism, survive in remarkable profusion. Legends, too, are numerous and widespread; but these are more difficult to disentangle from the mythological web with which Islam has interwoven the mass of Buddhistic and Manichæan tradition. The legends and mediæval history of Chinese Turkistan have been treated very fully by M. Grenard in his work "La Haute Asie," embodying the researches of the Dutreuil de Rhins Mission to Tibet and Chinese Turkistan (1890–95), and I found afterwards that some of the material I collected had already been recorded by that Mission. The subject is of such interest, however, and the work done on it so little known, that I make no apology for recording some of